



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME CHRISTMAS - NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Emmanuel! God with us!
(Matthew 1:18-25)

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when we cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. During Advent it is particularly appropriate to have an Advent Wreath in the place where you pray. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.

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A white or gold candle has been placed (unlit) at the centre of the Advent Wreath. The Advent candles are lit before the prayer begins.

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

The Lord is here, present among us.
**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

**Throughout the Advent season
we have prepared our minds and hearts
to receive again the light of Christ
who is forever the great sign
of the Father's mercy and love for us.**

Lighting of the Christ candle

God of grace and mercy,
this night (today) we welcome your Son
who is forever the Light of the world.
**May that Light shine always in our hearts
so that we may bring it into the world.**

As the central candle is lit, all say:
Emmanuel, God is with us!

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1:18-25

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born.

His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins."

Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son
and that will call him Immanuel,
a name which means "God-is-with-us."

When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

Reflection

We began Advent with the cry, 'Come, Lord Jesus'. Now we end it with the joyful shout, 'God is with us!'

Reflecting on the historical birth of Jesus, the Church proclaims the truth that God is, and has always been, with his people. And if God is *with* us, then God is *for* us. God is on our side.

God has no desire to live in houses made of wood, stone or gold. God's deepest desire is to live in human flesh. Just as God did that in the human flesh of Jesus Christ a long time ago, God continues to do so now in us.

Like Mary, we accept God's invitation, allowing Jesus to become flesh in us, too; to be seen and experienced in good thoughts, good words and good actions, in deeds of loving kindness which bring life, not death, to God's people.

Christmas Promises

We are the people who once walked in darkness.
**Now the light of Christ brings brightness to our
minds and warmth to our hearts.**

Will you witness to the light
in the values and priorities of your life,

in the decisions you make,
and in the love you show to one another?
We will.

We believe that the Church is the family of Jesus.
Will you place your gifts and talents,
your time and energy,
at the service of the Gospel
and your community?
We will.

We believe in the presence of Jesus in every
human person, especially the poor, the weak,
the lonely and the outcasts.
Will you look after them,
bring them comfort,
share with them what you have?
We will.

We believe that the search for truth and justice,
the desire for peace and the good of one another,
are signs of Christ's presence.
Will you speak the truth in love,
work for justice and peace,
support and encourage one another?
We will.

Lord's Prayer

By word and example, Jesus himself
taught us how to pray,
so with confidence we say:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Eternal God,
the presence of Jesus among us this night (day)
fills us with hope.
Fulfil in us the promise of salvation
through that same Christ our Lord.
Amen

Blessing

May your blessing come down upon us, O Lord.
Keep us safe,
keep us from all evil
and lead us to life everlasting.
Amen.